

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
WESTERN DIVISION AT DAYTON**

ROBERT J. COUCHOT,

Plaintiff,

Case No. 3:10-cv-471

vs.

Judge Thomas M. Rose

**MICHAEL J. ASTRUE,
Commissioner of Social Security,**

Magistrate Judge Michael R. Merz

Defendant.

ENTRY AND ORDER OVERRULING COUCHOT'S OBJECTIONS (Doc. #12) TO THE MAGISTRATE JUDGE'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ; ADOPTING THE MAGISTRATE JUDGE'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Doc. #11) IN ITS ENTIRETY; AFFIRMING THE COMMISSIONER'S DECISION THAT COUCHOT IS NOT ENTITLED TO SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY BENEFITS AND TERMINATING THIS CASE

Plaintiff Robert J. Couchot ("Couchot") brought this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) for judicial review of the decision of the Defendant Commissioner of Social Security (the "Commissioner") that he is not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to Social Security disability benefits. On September 9, 2011, United States Magistrate Judge Michael R. Merz entered a Report and Recommendations¹ (doc. #11) recommending that the Commissioner's Decision be affirmed. Couchot subsequently filed Objections (doc. #12) and the time has run and the Commissioner has not responded to Couchot's Objections. This matter is, therefore, ripe for

¹Page 5 of the Report and Recommendations refers to both Judges Redmond and Amstead. Both references should be to Judge Redmond.

decision.

Couchot initially filed applications for disability insurance benefits (“SSD”) and supplemental security benefits (“SSI”) on January 9, 2007, alleging disability from July 1, 1987. The Commissioner denied these applications and Couchot took no further appeal.

Couchot filed subsequent applications for SSD and SSI on October 10, 2007. The Commissioner denied these applications initially and on reconsideration and informal remand. Administrative Law Judge (“ALJ”) David A. Redmond then determined that Couchot is not disabled. The Appeals Council denied Couchot’s request for review and Judge Redmond’s decision became the Commissioner’s final decision. Couchot then appealed to this Court pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 405(g)

Based upon the reasoning and citations of authority set forth in the Magistrate Judge’s Report and Recommendations (doc. #11) and in Couchot’s Objections (doc. #12), as well as upon a thorough de novo review of this Court’s file, including the Administrative Transcript, and a thorough review of the applicable law, this Court adopts the aforesaid Report and Recommendations in its entirety and, in so doing, affirms the Commissioner’s decision that Couchot is not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to SSD or SSI benefits.

This Court’s function is to determine whether the record as a whole contains substantial evidence to support the ALJ’s decision. *Bowen v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 478 F.3d 742, 745-46 (6th Cir. 2007). This court must also determine whether the ALJ applied the correct legal criteria. *Id.*

Regarding the substantial evidence requirement, the ALJ’s findings must be affirmed if they are supported by “such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to

support a conclusion.” *Richardson v. Perales*, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971)(citing *Consolidated Edison Company v. NLRB*, 305 U.S. 197, 229 (1938)); *Landsaw v. Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 803 F.2d 211, 213 (6th Cir. 1986). Substantial evidence means such relevant evidence as a reasonable mind might accept as adequate to support a conclusion. *Richardson, supra*, at 401; *Ellis v. Schweicker*, 739 F.2d 245, 248 (6th Cir. 1984). Substantial evidence is more than a mere scintilla, but only so much as would be required to prevent a directed verdict (now judgment as a matter of law) against the ALJ/Commissioner if this case were being tried to a jury. *Foster v. Bowen*, 853 F.2d 483, 486 (6th Cir. 1988); *NLRB v. Columbian Enameling and Stamping Company*, 306 U.S. 292, 300 (1939).

The second judicial inquiry - reviewing the ALJ’s legal criteria - may result in reversal even if the record contains substantial evidence supporting the ALJ’s factual findings. *See Bowen*, 478 F.3d at 746. A reversal based on the ALJ’s legal criteria may occur, for example, when the ALJ has failed to follow the Commissioner’s “own regulations and where that error prejudices a claimant on the merits or deprives the claimant of a substantial right.” *Bowen*, 478 F.3d at 746(citing in part *Wilson v. Commissioner of Social Security*, 378 F.3d 541, 546-47 (6th Cir. 2004)).

In this case, the ALJ’s decision is supported by substantial evidence and the ALJ has applied the correct legal criteria. WHEREFORE, based upon the aforesaid, Couchot’s Objections to the Magistrate Judge’s Report and Recommendations (doc. #12) are OVERRULED, and this Court adopts the Report and Recommendations of the United States Magistrate Judge (doc. #11) in its entirety. The Commissioner’s decision that Couchot was not disabled and, therefore, not entitled to benefits under the Social Security Act is AFFIRMED. Finally, the captioned cause is

hereby ordered terminated upon the docket records of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Western Division, at Dayton.

DONE and **ORDERED** in Dayton, Ohio, this Eleventh Day of October, 2011.

s/Thomas M. Rose

JUDGE THOMAS M. ROSE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

Copies furnished to: Counsel of Record